An annotated video corpus of interactions dealing with the collaborative construction of fiction in games

Peter Menke (Paderborn University, Germany)

In this ongoing project we are assembling a video corpus of broadcasts of various Let's Play (LP) channels on platforms such as Twitch and YouTube. In particular, we focus on presentations of board games, card games and tabletop role-playing games, rather than video games (which are the prototypical game genre presented in LPs). Such interactions typically contain data with the following characteristics:

- There is face-to-face interaction between two or more participants.
- The participants are involved in imaginative, immersive games that work by collaboratively creating and inventing fiction (Fine, 2002; Herbrik, 2011; Schmidt, 2011). As a consequence, participants produce utterances that are interpreted as "in character" contributions. This means that they are uttered "inside the story", and, thus, need to be interpreted in the context of the fictional reality created by the participants. For instance, in a round of Monopoly, utterances about mortgages or auctions influence the game reality, but they do not have any financial consequence for the players in the real world.
- Apart from this, the participants also produce "out of character" utterances that belong to the normal level of reality (and, often, serve metacommunicative functions). Two characteristic variations are (a) communication within the group of players, and (b) communication directed to the remote audience of the LP setting.

At the moment, we restrict the corpus to one language (German). On the basis of the corpus we investigate how people use language when they play. For this, we investigate questions such as the following:

- How do players design their contributions for the different communication partners (fellow players, bystanders, (a)synchronous remote audiences, etc.)?
- How do the "in character" contributions differ from "out of character" contributions?
- How do players comment the game from an outside perspective? How do they separate these utterances from those belonging to the game? Do they produce explicit signals for 'switching realities'?
- How do the players resolve conflicts, unclear points, and misunderstandings related to the rules of the game at hand?

We already worked on several on these questions in smaller case studies based on single LP sessions. As a next step, we assemble this corpus that will enable us to rely on a larger data basis. This growing corpus consists of videos that have been made publicly available on the respective video platforms. After obtaining permission for the download, we create outlines describing the phases of the game dialogues along with the main events, both on the game level and outside of it. The audio material is transcribed following the GAT 2 conventions (Selting et al., 2009) using EXMARaLDA (Schmidt, 2002, 2009) and annotated following an action-oriented annotation schema that is being developed and refined during this project. Our goal is to support qualitative approaches such as Conversation Analysis (as already performed in the case studies) as well as quantitative investigations at a later stage, where frequencies and durations of dialogue or game phases are analysed.

References

Barlow, M. (2013). Individual differences and usage-based grammar. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics,* 18(4), 443-478.

Fine, G. A. (2002). *Shared fantasy: Role-playing games as social worlds.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Herbrik, R. (2011). *Die kommunikative Konstruktion imaginärer Welten. Wissen, Kommunikation und Gesellschaft.* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften / Springer, Wiesbaden.

Schmidt, D. N. (2011). *Zwischen Simulation und Narration: Theorie des Fantasy-Rollenspiels. Mit einer Analyse der Spielsysteme Das Schwarze Auge, Shadowrun und H P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Schmidt, T. (2002). Gesprächstranskription auf dem Computer: das System EXMARaLDA. *Gesprächsforschung*, 3, 1–23.

Schmidt, T. (2009). Creating and Working with Spoken Language Corpora in EXMARaLDA. In V. Lyding (Ed.), *LULCL II 2008. Proceedings of the Second Colloquium on Lesser Used Languages and Computer Linguistics* (pp. 151–164).

Selting, M., Auer, P., Barth-Weingarten, D., Bergmann, J. R., Bergmann, P., Birkner, K., Couper-Kuhlen, E., et al. (2009). Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem 2 (GAT 2). *Gesprächsforschung*, 10, 353–402.